

Appendix V

History Of Third Parties In Canada; 1911-2025

THIRD PARTIES IN QUEBEC

The Bloc Québécois is not the first Quebec-only political party at the federal level in Canada. In fact it is the fourth. The first was former Liberal Henri Bourassa's Parti Nationaliste, which took 27 of Quebec's 65 seats in the election of 1911, thereby facilitating the defeat of Sir Wilfrid Laurier after 15 years in power. But by the following election of 1917, Laurier had brought Bourassa back into the Liberal fold, and together they swept Quebec with 62 out of 65 seats. The second was the Bloc Populaire Canadien, formed to oppose wartime conscription in Quebec. Under its federal leader, former Liberal MP Maxime Raymond¹, the Bloc Populaire cut deeply into the Tories' Quebec vote in 1945, although winning only two seats. Once again, the Liberals under Mackenzie King and then Louis St. Laurent managed to absorb this party by the 1949 election, when St. Laurent won 68 of Quebec's 73 seats. And the third was R  al Caouette's Cr  ditistes, who suddenly took 26 Quebec seats in 1962, to the astonishment of PC prime minister John Diefenbaker, who had won 50 Quebec seats in 1958 thanks to the all-out assistance of premier Maurice Duplessis².

R  al Caouette³ had an extraordinary political career, first being elected to the House of Commons in a 1946 by-election for the Union des   lecteurs. He became a major supper-hour TV star in Quebec in the 1960s, preaching Social Credit gospel with blackboard and chalk. But in the typical pattern of Quebec third parties, after his 1962 breakthrough his total fell in 1963 to 20 Quebec seats. In 1965, after he had split from the national Social Credit party and formed his own Ralliement des Cr  ditistes in Quebec, Caouette won only nine seats. In 1968 he won 14 Quebec seats, 15 in 1972, and 11 in 1974. After Caouette's death in 1976, Social Credit in Quebec and at the national level went into decline. The party fell to only six seats under Fabien Roy in the 1979 election. It was shut out of Parliament altogether in 1980, never to return. Meanwhile the Liberal party gradually re-asserted its dominance in Quebec, winning 35 seats in 1962, 47 in 1963, 56 in each of 1965, 1968 and 1972, 60 in 1974, and 67 in 1979.

It is fascinating to recall that in 1921 Mackenzie King faced a situation in Quebec that bore remarkable similarities to that faced by Brian Mulroney in 1990. King, under pressure to recruit a high-profile Quebec candidate, had persuaded former Quebec premier Sir Lomer Gouin to enter federal politics. As the Liberal candidate in the Montreal riding of Laurier-Outremont, Gouin won an easy victory in the general election of December 6, 1921. The Conservative Montreal Gazette then predicted that Gouin, who headed a large block of Quebec MPs, would soon become the real leader of the federal Liberal party. During the 1921 campaign, there was another rumour that Gouin and Liberal MP Rodolphe Lemieux were plotting with Conservative

¹ The unofficial co-leader of the federal Bloc Populaire was former Montreal mayor Camillien Houde.

² Duplessis had died in 1959, and Jean Lesage had become Liberal premier of Quebec in 1960.

³ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R  al_Caouette

prime minister Arthur Meighen to unite the protectionist forces and enable Gouin to take power in Ottawa. King was furious and demanded a public show of support from the two Quebec Liberals. Lemieux complied with a letter published in the press, but Gouin simply sent indirect assurances of support. King continued to harbour doubts about the loyalty of his brilliant recruit⁴.

History shows that since the days of Laurier, whenever the Liberal party has been seriously threatened in Quebec, they have found a way to co-opt and gradually absorb the threatening elements, thereby restoring their traditional hegemony. In Quebec, the fires of the independence movement may die down from time to time, but the embers are never fully extinguished. As we saw in the federal election of 2019, under their new leader Yves-François Blanchet, the Bloc Québécois, which many had thought to be on the verge of extinction, roared back to life with 32 of Quebec's 78 seats, including my own riding of Brome-Missisquoi. In the previous election in 2015, the Bloc had won only 10 Quebec seats – fewer than the Liberals' 40 seats, the NDP's 16, and the Conservatives' 12. Blanchet's admitted political idol and mentor is none other than Lucien Bouchard.

THIRD PARTIES BASED IN WESTERN CANADA

Just as most of Canada's anglophone politicians and journalists have had difficulty in understanding Quebec politics, so have most central and eastern Canadians had difficulty in understanding the unpredictable, volatile, amorphous, and sometimes interchangeable political parties that arose in western Canada in the 1930s, and again in 1987.

The following excerpt from an article archived online by Library and Archives Canada⁵ provides useful background. Its theme is The West as Home, and Western Protest.

Formerly part of the North-West Territories (which was demarcated from the rest of Canada in 1875), the two Prairie provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan attained provincehood in 1905, but did not obtain control of their own natural resources until 1930.

Yet even before entering the Dominion of Canada, the West had an entrenched antipathy to eastern Canada, which it did not believe protected or promoted the interests of westerners. By the First World War, western Canadians were generally suspicious of the federal government, which seemed more concerned with pandering to the interests of the more heavily-populated "Ottawa-Montreal-Toronto triangle" than other parts of the country. When Prime Minister Robert Borden granted a military exemption to western farmers in 1917, and then reneged on his promise several weeks later, the already-established pattern of Western protest was reinforced.

Matters worsened with the economic depression following the First World War, which created working-class discontent and made the West ripe for confrontation. This occurred in the famous 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, which greatly alarmed Winnipeg's city elites yet rallied thousands of political and labour activists, many of whom faced arrest and imprisonment for

⁴ Lomer Gouin was a radical Liberal, who was premier of Quebec from 1905 to 1920; he had married the daughter of former nationalist or autonomist premier Honoré Mercier.

⁵ https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/canadian-west/052903/05290304_e.html

their display of labour solidarity. This included Methodist minister J.S. Woodsworth⁶, who was charged with seditious libel and was incarcerated briefly. This unparalleled withdrawal of labour in a major Western city showed that all was not right on the Prairies.

The confrontation in Winnipeg, however, was only one manifestation of western grievances. During and following the First World War, western social reformers clamoured for prohibition and women's suffrage, which they considered to be part of a broader battle for order and equality in the Canadian Confederation. Meanwhile, political activists, weary of the dominance of old-line parties which did not acknowledge the contributions of the West to the Canadian economy or polity, looked to third-party protest movements to exert influence. This they found in the unorthodox National Progressive Party, which succeeded in winning enough seats to form the official opposition in the 1921 federal election.

By the 1920s, the West had an established regional identity that would manifest itself in future political and social protest movements with a distinctive western flair. In the years to come, the rest of Canada would have no choice but to sit up and take notice.

As with the Bloc Québécois in Quebec, the Reform Party of Canada was not the first western-based federal party to challenge the supremacy of the Liberals and Conservatives in western Canada. The first and most significant (apart from Reform) was the National Progressive Party mentioned in the foregoing article; there were also the United Farmers of Alberta, the Reconstruction Party, the Social Credit Party, and the CCF/NDP.

The origins of the Progressive movement in the 1920s bear some examination, as they have many similarities to the 1980s origins of Preston Manning's Reform Party of Canada.

In June 1919, Thomas Crerar, minister of agriculture in the Unionist government of Robert Borden, quit the Borden cabinet because minister of finance Thomas White introduced a budget that, in Crerar's opinion, failed to sufficiently reduce the tariff on imported farm machinery. Saskatchewan farmer leader and independent MP John Archibald Maharg also withdrew his support from the government and joined Crerar, as did eight other Unionist MPs from the west. This loosely-organized caucus proved to be the beginnings of the National Progressive Party.

Owing to the movement's outgrowth from a variety of provincial farmers' organizations, agrarian leaders were divided on an appropriate federal political strategy. Henry Wise Wood, president of the United Farmers of Alberta, opposed turning the farmers' political movement into a formal Third Party. His political experience in the U.S., rooted in observation of the American Populists of the 1890s, led him to believe that the social friction caused by such a third party would lead to the splintering and destruction of the farmers movements in general. Wood argued that the Canadian farmers' movement should remain a grassroots democratic organization, or an "economic solidarity group". He advocated for cooperative democracy against the autocratic and corrupting tendencies of competitive party politics. Wood's theory of group government was

⁶ A founder of the Cooperative Commonwealth Confederation, forerunner of today's New Democratic Party.

considered revolutionary at the time, with critics accusing his collectivism as introducing "Sovietism" to Westminster responsible government.

The struggle between Wood's "group government" faction, and agrarian leaders including Crerar who advocated a more traditional party-centric approach to federal politics, troubled the party throughout its existence. In their first formal caucus meeting on March 3, 1920, Crerar and eleven allied MPs established the Progressive Party of Canada, with Crerar as its first leader. Nevertheless, Crerar was unable to secure support among members of the Canadian Council of Agriculture for the establishment of significant party structure; thus, the party had no formal national organization, with the Canadian Council of Agriculture itself providing a minimal degree of structure. Crerar formally served as parliamentary leader of the Progressives until the provincial organizations accepted his endorsement as national leader by the Canadian Council of Agriculture in 1921.

The new party won 58⁷ of the 235 seats in the House of Commons in the 1921 general election, despite the lack of national party structure. It thus became the second largest party after Mackenzie King's 118 Liberals, and ahead of outgoing prime minister Arthur Meighen's 49 Conservatives. Ten independents were also elected, who supported the Liberals, giving King a majority of one. Meighen resigned, and King formed a government. Since Crerar did not want to become leader of the official opposition, Meighen retained that title. Over time, King fluctuated between a slim majority and a minority, but he always found enough Progressive MPs who were willing to back him on crucial votes to give him a working majority.

King remained as prime minister up to and following the election of October 29, 1925, even though in that election he won only 101 seats, compared to Meighen's 116; but King kept the support of the reduced Progressive caucus of 24. However on June 26, 1926 King suddenly and dramatically resigned in order to avoid a vote of censure over the Beauharnois scandal, after Governor General Lord Byng had refused to grant him a dissolution. Byng asked Meighen to form a government, which lasted only three days before losing a confidence vote. In the ensuing election on September 14, 1926 (the King-Byng election), King won a working majority with 116 seats out of the new total of 245, while the Progressives were reduced to 13 MPs, along with 9 Liberal-Progressives⁸. Meighen's Conservatives took 91 seats.

In the 1926 election King won the largest number of seats despite receiving a smaller proportion of the popular vote than the Tories. Very significantly, the Liberals did not run candidates in all ridings, having made an informal electoral pact⁹ with the Progressives and Liberal-Progressives. In Manitoba, for example, although Meighen's party captured almost 40 percent of the vote,

⁷ This number is often given as 62 or 64 Progressives, as a result of including various independent supporters.

⁸ Slightly different totals are sometimes given for Progressives, United Farmers of Alberta, and others, depending on their shifting allegiances. In any case, there were 38 MPs who were neither Liberal nor Conservative.

⁹ In the three elections of 1993, 1997 and 2000, the short-sighted Tory leadership refused to countenance any such electoral pact with Preston Manning's Reform Party, resulting in three consecutive majorities for the Liberals under Jean Chrétien, as Reform and the Tories split the Ontario non-Liberal vote between them. In 2004 Stephen Harper's newly reunited Conservative Party finally reduced Paul Martin's Liberals to a minority, and then won a majority in 2006.

twice the vote share of any other party, it won no seats. Thus, Mackenzie King's Liberals were able to govern until 1930 with the support of Liberal-Progressive members of parliament.

Owing to Mackenzie King's successful manoeuvrings, schemings, tergiversations and seductions over 20 years, after 1921 the number of Progressive MPs and their allies declined inexorably from election to election, usually to the benefit of the Liberal party. According to the House of Commons website¹⁰, they won 24 seats in 1925, 22 in 1926, 5 in 1930, 2 in 1935, and 3 in 1940 – their last gasp before disappearing forever.

Enter the United Farmers of Alberta. The UFA was founded in 1909 as a lobby group following a merger between the Alberta Farmers' Association and Alberta branches of the Canadian Society for Equity. The UFA began as a non-partisan organization whose aim was to promote the interest of farmers in the province. At risk of losing influence to the upstart Alberta Non-Partisan League – which ran in four rural constituencies in the 1917 provincial election, winning two – and dissatisfied with the existing political parties, UFA entered the provincial arena in 1919. Some prominent UFA members (including its president, Henry Wise Wood) at first opposed entering into direct politics, as opposed to lobbying, because they thought abandoning the UFA's non-partisan policy would cause the UFA to break up.

In 1919, the UFA won a provincial by-election in the Cochrane constituency. In 1921, Robert Gardiner won a seat in a federal by-election, becoming UFA's first Member of Parliament. Encouraged by this, UFA ran in 45 of Alberta's 61 ridings in the 1921 provincial election. To the surprise of nearly everyone, including themselves, UFA took 38 seats in the election, winning a majority government, and sweeping the Alberta provincial Liberals out of power after almost 16 years. UFA and Progressive party candidates also captured all but two of the Alberta federal seats in the 1921 federal election (the other two were taken by Labour candidates).

In 1921 and 1925 the UFA won two federal seats. In 1926 they won 11 of Alberta's 13 seats, and then 9 seats in 1930, before dissolving into other federal parties and abandoning federal politics.

The short-lived Reconstruction Party is dealt with here, even though it appeared a few years after both the Social Credit party and the CCF that are covered below. It was founded by Henry Herbert Stevens, a British-born long-time Conservative Member of Parliament from British Columbia who had served as Minister of Trade in the Arthur Meighen government of 1921, and as Minister of Trade and Commerce from 1930 to 1934 in the Depression-era government of R. B. Bennett.

Bennett had appointed Stevens Chairman of the Price-Spreads Commission in 1934, where Stevens argued for drastic economic reform and government intervention in the economy. When it became evident that the Bennett would not implement the proposals of the

¹⁰ See: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/procedure-book-livre/Document.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&sbdid=52D6EE8F-4D4D-409B-B611-893254EF4FFC>

Price-Spreads Commission, Stevens quit the Bennett government and formed his own Reconstruction Party.

The party was isolationist, opposing Canadian involvement in a European war, and was also opposed to the League of Nations sanctions against fascist Italy for its invasion of Ethiopia.

The Reconstruction Party nominated 174 candidates in the 1935 federal election. It won more votes nationally than the two other new parties that contested that election, the CCF and Social Credit. The Liberal vote was 2,076,394, the Conservative vote 1,308,688, and that for the Reconstruction Party 389,708; while the CCF and the Social Credit parties garnered 386,484 and 187,045 votes respectively. Many of the Reconstruction votes were at the expense of the Conservative Party. In 48 ridings, the margin of victory for the Liberal candidate over the Conservative candidate was less than the number of votes received by the Reconstruction Party candidate, indicating that the Conservative in those ridings might well have won had there been no Reconstruction candidate in the running. This might have reduced Mackenzie King's Liberals to 125 seats, a majority of only three seats in the 245-seat House of Commons.

But despite receiving 8.7 percent of the vote, the party won only one seat, that of H. H. Stevens himself in Kootenay East. The Reconstruction Party came to an end when Stevens rejoined the Conservatives in 1938.

SOCIAL CREDIT

The next federal vehicle of western discontent and resentment¹¹ was the Social Credit Party of Canada¹². This summary is mainly taken from Wikipedia, as are the ensuing descriptions of the CCF/NDP and the Reform Party of Canada.

The national social credit movement in Canada was largely an outgrowth of the Alberta Social Credit Party, and unsurprisingly the Social Credit Party of Canada was strongest in Alberta during this period. In 1932, Baptist evangelist William Aberhart¹³ (premier of Alberta from 1935 until his death in 1943, when he was succeeded by Preston Manning's father Ernest Manning) used his weekly radio program Back to the Bible Hour to preach the values of social credit throughout the province. He added a heavy dose of fundamentalist Christianity to the monetary theories of British engineer Major C. H. Douglas¹⁴. As a result, the social credit movement in Canada always had a strong social conservative tint.

The national party was formed in 1935 as the Western Social Credit League. It attracted voters from the Progressive Party of Canada and the United Farmers movement. The party grew out of disaffection with the status quo during the Great Depression, which hit the party's western

¹¹ The best illustration of this pervasive feeling is an apocryphal story. A western farmer, having suffered through three years of drought and dust, is finally about to harvest a meagre crop, when it is totally destroyed by a sudden hailstorm. He goes into his ruined fields and shakes his fist at the sky, shouting "God damn the CPR!"

¹² See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Credit_Party_of_Canada#:~:text=The%20Social%20Credit%20Party%20of,the%20Canadian%20social%20credit%20movement.

¹³ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Aberhart

¹⁴ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._H._Douglas

Canadian birthplace especially hard. The Depression can be credited both for the creation of the Social Credit party on the right, and the rise of the social democratic Co-operative Commonwealth Federation on the left, forerunner of today's New Democratic Party – the only western-based protest party to have survived until the present day.

In the Social Credit party's first federal election in 1935, it ran candidates only in Western Canada. It won 17 seats, of which 15 were in Alberta, where it won over 46 percent of that province's popular vote.

In 1939, Social Credit merged with the New Democracy movement led by the well-connected former Conservative William Duncan Herridge¹⁵. At the party's first national convention in 1944, delegates founded the Social Credit Association of Canada as a national party. They chose Alberta Treasurer Solon Earl Low as the party's first national leader.

In 1957, Solon Low led the party to its best performance to date, with 19 seats. However, in 1958, the Socreds were swept out of the Commons altogether as part of that year's massive Progressive Conservative landslide. Although it was not apparent at the time, this began a long-term decline for the party. For most of its first quarter-century of existence, Social Credit had been either the first or second party in much of rural western Canada, particularly in its birthplace of rural Alberta. In 1957, for instance, it took 13 of Alberta's 17 federal seats, thanks largely to the strong support of premier Ernest Manning.

However, the 1958 defeat of Social Credit firmly established the Tories as the main right-wing party west of Ontario, and Social Credit would never seriously challenge the Tories there again. As an authentic westerner himself from Saskatchewan, new PC leader John Diefenbaker was able to connect and resonate with western voters in a way that non-western leaders find difficult to do¹⁶. Diefenbaker's western sweep in 1958 laid the groundwork for his party's western base that, with the exception of the heyday of the Reform Party in the elections of 1993, 1997 and 2000, has endured to this day.

CCF / NDP

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was founded in 1932 in Calgary by a number of socialist, agrarian, co-operative, and labour groups, and the League for Social Reconstruction. In 1944, the CCF formed the first social-democratic government in North America when it was elected to form the provincial government in Saskatchewan, under its charismatic leader Tommy Douglas.

¹⁵ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Duncan_Herridge

¹⁶ On page 588 of his Memoirs, Brian Mulroney laments that despite Alberta having three major ministers in his cabinet (deputy prime minister Don Mazankowski, foreign affairs minister Joe Clark, and consumer and corporate affairs minister Harvie Andre); despite his abolition of the hated National Energy Policy and the Foreign Investment Review Act; despite his moving the head office of the National Energy Board to Calgary and having created a cabinet-level Western Diversification Agency in Edmonton; and despite western farmers having received record financial assistance from his government, Preston Manning nevertheless successfully launched his Reform Party in early 1988 claiming that the Mulroney government had "ignored Alberta". Unlike Lucien Bouchard, Preston Manning was never a personal friend of Brian Mulroney. Yet Brian felt an almost equal sense of personal betrayal when Preston started the Reform Party. His eventual view of the situation was that Alberta would never take Yes for an answer. My own view is that it was Preston Manning's personal ambition that became the decisive catalyst for crystallizing one more time the always-latent western discontent with Confederation.

The CCF aimed to alleviate the suffering that workers and farmers, the ill and the old endure under capitalism, seen most starkly during the Great Depression, through the creation of a Co-operative Commonwealth, which would entail economic co-operation, public ownership of the economy, and political reform.

The object of the political party was "the federation of organizations whose purpose is the establishment in Canada of a co-operative commonwealth, in which the basic principle of regulating production, distribution and exchange will be the supplying of human needs instead of the making of profit."

The party settled on the awkward name "Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (Farmer-Labour-Socialist)" and selected J. S. Woodsworth as party leader. Woodsworth had been an Independent Labour MP since 1921 and a member of the Ginger Group of MPs. The party's 1933 convention, held in Regina, Saskatchewan, adopted the Regina Manifesto as the party's program. The manifesto outlined a number of objectives, including public ownership of key industries, universal public pensions, universal health care, children's allowances, unemployment insurance, and workers' compensation.

Its conclusion read, "No CCF Government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation the full programme of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Co-operative Commonwealth." The party became affiliated with the Socialist International.

The goal of the CCF was defined as a "community freed from the domination of irresponsible financial and economic power in which all social means of production and distribution, including land, are socially owned and controlled either by voluntarily organized groups of producers and consumers or – in the case of major public services and utilities and such productive and distributive enterprises as can be conducted most efficiently when owned in common – by public corporations responsible to the people's elected representatives".

Many of the party's first members of parliament were members of the Ginger Group, composed of United Farmers of Alberta, left-wing Progressives, and Labour MPs. These MPs included UFA MPs William Irvine and Ted Garland, Agnes Macphail (United Farmers of Ontario), Humphrey Mitchell, Abraham Albert Heaps, Angus MacInnis, and Labour MP J. S. Woodsworth. Also involved in founding the new party were members of the League for Social Reconstruction, such as F. R. Scott¹⁷ and historian Frank Underhill.

In its first federal election in 1935, seven CCF MPs were elected to the House of Commons. Eight were elected in the following election in 1940, including their first member east of

¹⁷ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F._R._Scott; Frank Scott was a Quebec Rhodes scholar and a law professor at McGill, famous for having won legal victories over the Duplessis government in the case of Jehovah's Witness Frank Roncarelli, and in the so-called Padlock Law case. He was national chairman of the CCF from 1942 to 1950. For many years he was prevented from being named Dean of the McGill law school because of his socialist and supposed communist leanings, finally being appointed in 1961. Frank Scott attended my wedding in 1973, with his wife the painter Marion Scott.

Manitoba, Clarence Gillis, in the riding of Cape Breton South, a coal-mining area of Nova Scotia.

The party was divided with the outbreak of World War II: Woodsworth was a pacifist, while many party members supported the Canadian war effort. Woodsworth had a physically debilitating stroke in May 1940 and could no longer perform his duties as leader. In October, Woodsworth wrote a letter to the 1940 CCF convention, in essence asking to retire from the leadership. Instead, the delegates created the new position of Honorary President, abolished the President's position and re-elected M. J. Coldwell as the National Chairman. Coldwell was then appointed acting House Leader in November. Woodsworth died on 21 March 1942, and Coldwell officially became the new leader at the July convention in Toronto and threw the party behind the war effort. As a memorial to Woodsworth, Coldwell suggested that the CCF create a research foundation, and Woodsworth House was established in Toronto for that purpose.

The CCF won a critical York South by-election on February 8, 1942¹⁸, and in the process prevented Arthur Meighen from re-entering the House of Commons.

It was in provincial politics that the party had its greatest success in the 1940s. In 1943, the Ontario CCF became the official opposition in that province, terrifying the bourgeoisie, and in 1944 the Saskatchewan CCF formed the first democratic socialist government in North America, with Tommy Douglas as premier. Douglas introduced universal Medicare to Saskatchewan, a policy that was soon adopted by other provinces and implemented nationally by the Liberal Party during the administration of prime minister Lester B. Pearson.

The 1945 federal election was the first since the victory of the CCF in the Saskatchewan provincial election, and many predicted a major breakthrough for the CCF nationally. A Gallup poll from September 1943 showed the CCF with a one-point lead over both the Liberals and Conservatives. The party was expected to win 70 to 100 seats, possibly even enough to form a minority government. Despite the expectations, the party only won 28 seats. King lost 59 seats and barely clung to power with 118 seats, five seats short of a majority in a house of 245 seats. King lost his own seat in Prince Albert.

Although the election officially resulted in a minority government, the election of eight "Independent Liberal" MPs, most of whom did not run as official Liberals because of their opposition to conscription, gave the King government an effective working majority. Most of the Independent Liberal MPs joined (or re-joined) the Liberal caucus when the conscription issue became moot after the war.

¹⁸ Newly re-elected as Conservative leader, former prime minister Arthur Meighen was defeated in his attempt to win a seat in the House of Commons by Joseph W. Noseworthy, the CCF candidate (assisted by Mackenzie King's Liberals). The election was a major breakthrough for the CCF, and ended Meighen's attempt to return to politics. In later years, York South became known as perennial leaders' riding, the home district for CCF and NDP leaders E.B "Ted" Jolliffe, Donald C. MacDonald, David Lewis and Bob Rae. My friend and classmate Sen. Michael Meighen is Arthur Meighen's grandson, appointed to the Senate by Brian Mulroney in 1990. Michael is the 19th chancellor of McGill University, and a major benefactor of the Stratford Shakespearian Festival.

Mackenzie King dealt with the CCF threat essentially by stealing their most popular social welfare policies. A Liberal slogan in 1945 encouraged voters to "Build a New Social Order" by endorsing the Liberal platform, which included:

\$750 million to provide land, jobs and business support for veterans;
\$400 million of public spending to build housing;
\$250 million for family allowances; establishing an industrial development bank; loans to farmers, floor prices for agricultural products; tax reductions.

During the Cold War, the CCF was accused of having Communist leanings. The party moved to address these accusations in 1956 by replacing the Regina Manifesto with a more moderate document, the Winnipeg Declaration.

After 1945 the CCF's electoral fortunes fluctuated: 13 seats in 1949, 23 in 1953, 25 in 1957, and only eight seats in the 1958 Diefenbaker landslide. Their poor 1958 result brought about a major re-appraisal of the party's future. After much discussion, the CCF and the Canadian Labour Congress decided to join forces to create a new political party that could make social democracy more popular with Canadian voters. This party became the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1961, and chose Saskatchewan premier Tommy Douglas as its first leader at a five-day convention in Ottawa.

I vividly remember the extensive and favourable national media coverage of the NDP's founding convention, and the real sense that Tommy Douglas would bring a welcome breath of fresh air to Ottawa, where John Diefenbaker and Lester Pearson were locked in a sterile struggle¹⁹. But instead of capitalizing on this momentum, Douglas chose to take a long vacation immediately after the convention, and disappeared from the media for weeks. The young Lochinvar come out of the West failed after all to ride off with the Canadian electorate.

The influence of organized labour on the NDP is still reflected in the party's conventions, as affiliated trade unions send delegates on a formula based on their number of members. Since approximately one-quarter of the convention delegates have recently been from affiliated labour groups, after the party changed to a one-member, one-vote method of electing leaders in leadership races, labour delegate votes are scaled to 25 percent of the total number of ballots cast for leader.

The NDP has never won the largest share of seats at the federal level. It is typically the third or fourth-largest party in the House of Commons, although from 2011 to 2015, it formed the Official Opposition under Jack Layton. However, the party has held influence during periods of minority governments. Provincial New Democratic parties have formed the government in six provinces and one territory.

The NDP has had nine federal leaders: Tommy Douglas 1961- 1971; David Lewis 1971-1975; Ed Broadbent 1975-1989; Audrey McLaughlin 1989-1995; Alexa McDonough 1995-2003; Jack

¹⁹ Peter Newman wrote of this period that it showed that Canada could get along perfectly well without a government.

Layton 2003-2011; Nycole Turmel (interim) 2011-2012; Tom Mulcair 2012- 2017; and Jagmeet Singh 2017-present.

Its greatest electoral success was the astonishing, indeed unimaginable Orange Wave that swept Quebec in the election of May 2, 2011, when “Le bon Jack” Layton led his party to official opposition status, with 103 seats overall, of which an unprecedented 59 seats were in Quebec²⁰. Layton went into the election holding only a single seat in Quebec, that of Thomas Mulcair in Outremont – the most the party had ever won in that province. Layton reduced the Liberals in Quebec to 7 seats, the Conservatives to 5, and the Bloc Québécois to only 4. Sadly, Layton did not live to savour the fruits of his victory, dying of cancer on August 22, 2011, not long after the election, at the age of 61.

In the 19 elections since its foundation, the NDP’s national seat count has varied from a low of 9 in 1993 under Audrey McLaughlin, to a high (excluding 2011) of 44 in 2015 under Thomas Mulcair. In 2019 under Jagmeet Singh, the NDP won 24 seats, down drastically from Mulcair’s 44 seats in 2015.

In the past three Canadian federal elections, the New Democratic Party (NDP) has seen significant fluctuations in its seat count. In the 2019 election, the party won 24 seats, a substantial reduction from earlier highs but enough to maintain a presence in Parliament. In 2021, the NDP managed a slight improvement, gaining one additional seat to bring their total to 25. However, the 2025 election marked a dramatic reversal of fortune, as the party suffered its worst result in history, securing only 7 seats and losing official party status. This steep decline highlighted the challenges the NDP faced in maintaining its electoral base amid shifting political dynamics in Canada.

²⁰ A story that has passed into electoral folklore is that of Ruth Ellen Brosseau, the 2011 NDP candidate in Berthier-Maskinongé. Only 26 years old when nominated, a single mother working as assistant manager of an Ottawa pub, she did not campaign, and never went to the riding. During the election, Brosseau went on vacation to Las Vegas for her April 26 birthday. She was easily elected in the NDP sweep. Happily, she turned out to be a diligent and effective MP until defeated in 2019, when the NDP lost all of their remaining seats in Quebec except that of Quebec lieutenant Alexandre Boulerice, who was re-elected in his Montreal riding of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.